

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction comprising whey as an active component.

- 5 2. The agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to claim 1, wherein said whey is at least one of acid whey and cheese whey.

- 10 3. The agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to claim 2, wherein said acid whey comprises fermented milk whey obtained by fermentation of milk with bacteria including lactic acid bacteria.

- 15 4. The agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to claim 3, wherein said lactic acid bacteria are of the genus *Lactobacillus* sp.

- 20 5. The agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to claim 4, wherein said lactic acid bacteria of the genus *Lactobacillus* are of the species *Lactobacillus helveticus*.

- 25 6. The agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to claim 5, wherein said *Lactobacillus helveticus* is of a strain *Lactobacillus helveticus* CM4 (deposited at National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, International Patent

Organism Depositary under Accession Number FERM BP-6060).

7. The agent for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to claim 2, wherein said acid whey
5 is casein whey containing an aqueous fraction obtained by adding acid to milk.

8. Functional food for preventing or suppressing hepatic dysfunction comprising an agent for preventing or
10 suppressing hepatic dysfunction according to any one of claims 1 to 7.

9. The functional food according to claim 8, further comprising milk components other than whey.

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